

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 08254558 7

S ASBURY

Centennial Addresses

11/15/1904
A. S. B. L. N. Y.

FRANCIS ASBURY

CENTENNIAL ADDRESSES

BY

JUDGE HENRY WADE ROGERS

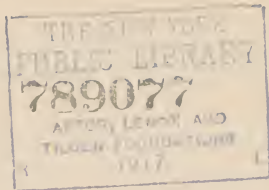
BISHOP JOSEPH F. BERRY

BISHOP FRANK M. BRISTOL

BISHOP FREDERICK D. LEETE



THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN
NEW YORK CINCINNATI



Copyright, 1917, by
THE METHODIST BOOK CONCERN

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
ASTOR, LENOX,
AND TILDEN
FOUNDATIONS
1917

CONTENTS

	PAGE
CENTENNIAL ADDRESS ON FRANCIS ASBURY.....	5
JUDGE HENRY WADE ROGERS	
THEN AND NOW.....	51
BISHOP JOSEPH F. BERRY	
FRANCIS ASBURY—THE BISHOP.....	66
BISHOP FRANK M. BRISTOL	
FRANCIS ASBURY—ITINERANT.....	90
BISHOP FREDERICK D. LEETE	

NEW YORK
PUBLISHED BY
LESTER K. BROWN

CENTENNIAL ADDRESS
ON
FRANCIS ASBURY

Delivered before the New York East Conference at Stamford,¹ Connecticut, on April 5, 1916, by Judge Henry Wade Rogers, of the United States Circuit Court of Appeals.

¹ Jesse Lee, in his *History of the Methodists*, speaking of the Conference of 1789, says: "We had one new circuit in Connecticut called Stamford, which was the first that was ever formed in that State or in any of the New England States. It was my lot to go to that circuit alone, and to labor by myself. Another preacher was appointed to the circuit with me, but he failed and never came, and I had to labor and suffer alone amongst a strange people."



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

FRANCIS ASBURY

THE centennial of the death of Francis Asbury is a profoundly impressive event. History has inscribed his name among the greatest apostles of Christianity in ancient or modern times. The Methodist Church throughout the world pauses from its labors to commemorate his life and service.

It has been said that the grandest thing, next to the radiance that flows from the throne of God, is the light of a noble and beautiful life, shining in benediction upon the destinies of men. We are assembled to commemorate such a life shining in benediction upon the great church to which we belong. Monuments are not built, nor mausoleums erected, nor eulogies spoken, to please the dead. No words which can be uttered here can reach that mysterious realm in which the spirit of Asbury dwells. Speech is not for the dead but for the living, that they may learn through great examples to live as those who rendered service to humanity and to God.

The character of Washington stands forth "alone like some peak that has no fellow in the mountain range of greatness." The character of Asbury towers solitary and alone in American Methodism, rising like a great peak high above the mountain range.

Asbury was born in England on August 20, 1745, in the parish of Handsworth, four miles from Birmingham. His parents were poor, and at the age of fourteen he was indentured to a maker of buckle chapes. His school training was meager. He received simply the rudiments of an education at the village school, although the parish in which he was born was hardly a day's ride from Oxford. His school days were short and quite unpleasant. The school was unendurable to him because of the cruelty of the teacher. It filled Asbury with such a horrible dread that with him anything was preferable to going to school. This deficiency of school training later became a source of great affliction to him. He refers to it in his *Journal*. "While I was a traveling preacher in England," he writes, "I was much tempted, finding myself exceedingly igno-

rant of almost everything a minister of the gospel ought to know." The schools gave him little more than the power to read and write and cipher. But what he lacked in this respect he labored in his subsequent years to supply. It was his custom as he traveled his circuits to ride with his book open before him. He thus made himself master of much sound learning. He attained a knowledge of Hebrew and Latin and Greek. He studied the Old and the New Testament in the languages in which they were written.

Seminaries and colleges in this country were few in number. Washington himself, rich and an aristocrat, only had a common school education. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that all the early Methodist bishops were, like Asbury, self-trained men. Whatcoat at the age of thirteen was apprenticed to a trade. McKendree's educational advantages were also very limited, and his lack of early culture often embarrassed him. The schools gave little to Enoch George, and nothing to Roberts save the simplest elements. The educational opportunities of Elijah Hedding were also small.

Joshua Soule and Beverly Waugh were boys of the backwoods and received such school training as the backwoods afforded. And Thomas A. Morris had school advantages of the most meager character. John Emory was the only one of the earlier bishops whose training was liberal according to the standards of his time. He was a graduate of Washington College in Maryland, had studied law and been admitted to the bar. But all these men had peculiar force and energy of character. They were without exception men of consecration and moral and intellectual power. They possessed marked ability and rendered effective service. Some of them were eloquent and brilliant preachers. Subsequent reading, observation, and study supplied the deficiencies of their earlier training. I think no one of them equaled Asbury in his scholastic attainments.

When the prophet Samuel went forth to anoint a successor to Saul he had the children of Jesse pass before him, and the prophet said unto Jesse, "The Lord hath not chosen these." And then Samuel said unto Jesse, "Are here all thy children?" Jesse answered,

“There remaineth yet the youngest.” Samuel said, “Send and fetch him.” Jesse did as he was bidden, and sent and brought David in, and he was goodly to look upon, and the Lord said, “This is he.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed David in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the Lord came upon him from that day forward.

At Bristol, in England, on a day in August, 1771, John Wesley was holding Conference. He called for volunteers for the work in America. A number volunteered and passed in review before him. Asbury was one of them, and he chose him to be his “assistant” in America. The title implied the general superintendence of the work in this country, although Asbury, like David, was the youngest man. At the time of his appointment he was twenty-six years of age. But the spirit of the Lord was upon him as it was upon David from that day forth. Before the Conference assembled he had been thinking for a half a year that perhaps it was his duty to go to America. He had laid the matter before the Lord, being unwilling to do his own will or to run before he was sent.

During this time his trials had been very great, which he thought the Lord permitted to prove and try him in order to prepare him for future usefulness. When he went to the Bristol Conference he had, he said, not one penny of money; but the Lord soon opened the hearts of friends who supplied him with clothes and ten pounds. After it was decided that he was to go to America, he went home to acquaint his parents with his great undertaking, which he opened in as gentle manner as possible. Though it was grievous to flesh and blood, they consented to let him, their only surviving child, undertake the work beyond the sea. They never were to see each other again, for Asbury was kept so busy in America that he could never find time for a journey back to the home from whence he came. What would have happened if his parents had not consented to his departure is not doubtful. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." In a letter to his mother he writes: "As for me, I know what I am called to; it is to give up all. . . . Let others condemn me as being without natural affection, stubborn,

disobedient to parents, or what they will. It does not alter the case. It is a small matter to be judged of men." In his heart, however, filial love was strong and tender. In one of his letters to his father, after he had been in America for years, he wrote: "I last evening made arrangements for a remittance to you. . . . My salary is sixty-four dollars; I have sold my watch and library, and will sell my shirts before you should want. . . . Your son Francis is a man of honor and conscience. As my father and mother never disgraced me by an act of dishonesty, I hope to echo back the same sound of an upright man. I am well satisfied that the Lord saw fit that you should be my parents rather than the king or queen or any of the great."

Throughout the American Revolution Wesley was much concerned over the relations between the colonies and Great Britain. Before open hostilities began he stated in print that he did not defend the measures which had been taken with regard to America, and that he doubted whether any man could defend them. He advised the Methodists to vote for candidates who

avored conciliation with America. He warned the advisers of the Crown that the people of America were oppressed; that they were asking for nothing more than their legal rights. He said they were "enthusiasts of liberty," contending for hearth and altar and for wife and children. He implored the prime minister, for God's sake and the king's, not to permit his sovereign to walk in the way of Rehoboam and of Charles the First. In 1775 he sent his preachers in America excellent advice. He wrote them: "You were never in your lives in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peacemakers; to be loving and tender to all, but to addict yourselves to no party. . . . Say not one word against one or the other side." Later he changed his views. So pronounced was his devotion to George the Third that it was said that England never had a more loyal subject than John Wesley. In the summer of 1775 he issued what he entitled "A Calm Address to our American Colonies." It was sold for a penny and was bought by forty thousand purchasers who were amazed to find that it

was simply an abbreviated version of Dr. Johnson's pamphlet on "Taxation No Tyranny," which had been published in the spring of the same year. People were amazed at Wesley's changed attitude, as up to that time he had publicly sympathized with the colonists. Wesley declared that he himself would no more continue in fellowship with Methodists who hated the king and Lord North than with Sabbath-breakers, thieves, or drunkards, or common swearers. This he declared in an address issued in 1777. He stated in that address that after bawling for liberty no liberty was left in America. That the lords of Congress were as absolute as the emperor of Morocco, while in England the fullest liberty was enjoyed.

Wesley's "Calm Address" made trouble for him at home, and it also made trouble for his preachers in America. Copies of the address got into the hands of our countrymen. The result was that until the war was near its end a Methodist preacher was an object of suspicion and distrust. The position of the English preachers Wesley had sent over was one of actual peril. In some of the colonies

oaths of allegiance were prescribed to be administered to all doubtful persons. The oath was to take up arms in aid of the colonies if called to do so by the colonial authorities. The English itinerants were unwilling to take the oath, and all but Asbury returned to England. He remained at his post. Wesley was severely censured for his utterances and was accused of having turned politician. The Methodists were thrown into a "fever of excitement." Wesley's attitude and the withdrawal of the English preachers from the country might easily have ended American Methodism, and would have done so but for Asbury. In his Journal, under date of March 19, 1776, Asbury wrote that he had received an affectionate letter from Mr. Wesley, and added that he was truly sorry that that venerable man had ever dipped into the politics of America. "My desire," writes Asbury, "is to live in love and peace with all men; to do them no harm but all the good I can. However, it discovers Mr. Wesley's conscientious attachment to the government under which he lived. Had he been a subject of America, no doubt but he would

have been as zealous an advocate of the American cause. But some inconsiderate persons have taken occasion to censure the Methodists in America on account of Mr. Wesley's political sentiments."

When Rankin, who had been sent over by Wesley, found how the war spirit dominated the colonists, he was unwilling to remain. He could not reconcile the American spirit with his sense of loyalty, and so wrote Asbury that he was going to return. Asbury's reply deserves our gratitude. It follows:

"I can by no means leave such a field for gathering souls to Christ as we have in America. It would be an everlasting dishonor to the Methodists that we should all leave three thousand souls who desire to commit themselves to our care; neither is it the part of a good shepherd to leave his flock in time of danger; therefore I am determined by the grace of God not to leave them, let the consequence be what it may."

I may add that the war was a grief to his soul. The righteous, he writes, are blessed with a pacific spirit and are bound for a kingdom of peace, where

“No horrid alarum of war
Shall break our eternal repose;
No sound of the trumpet is there
Where the spirit of Jesus o'erflows.”

Asbury never formally renounced his allegiance to the British government, and died a British subject. But he was thoroughly American in all his views and feelings.

Among the earliest of American ecclesiastical problems was that which for more than a hundred years vexed and embarrassed the Anglican Church throughout the colonies, and which very considerably troubled the Methodists. Bishops were needed to ordain and supervise the preachers. The English bishops deplored what they called the spiritual desolation of America, but they persistently refused to consecrate an American bishop. The reason was not wholly ecclesiastical. It was much more political. The Anglican Church was a state church, and the king was opposed to an American episcopate, lest he give offense to the dissenters throughout the colonies. Samuel Adams and the Congregationalists and Presbyterians were also dreading lest England should attempt

to impose upon them an episcopacy. The king knew any attempt of that sort would be deeply resented. The English Church, therefore, had persistently refused to comply with the demand which almost from the first settlement of the country the Episcopalians of America had continuously made for an American episcopate. As one of the Episcopal bishops has said, the wonder was while this controversy raged that the gates of hell did not prevail against the church. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that when Wesley besought the Archbishop of Canterbury to consecrate a bishop for the Methodists in America his request was promptly denied. Wesley was a High Churchman, but he had strong convictions on this subject, and so in 1784, at Bristol, in a private room, he laid his hands in ordination on Coke and set him apart as superintendent of the Methodist churches in America. Coke came to the United States bringing a letter from Wesley stating that he and Asbury were joint superintendents. A General Conference was called to meet in Baltimore on December 25, 1784. When it assembled, it decided to form

a distinct and separate church, and, upon the suggestion of John Dickins, it was unanimously resolved that it should be called the Methodist Episcopal Church. They next declared the office of general superintendent elective. This done, they by a unanimous vote elected Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury general superintendents. At that time Asbury was still an unordained preacher and had never administered the ordinances of the church. Along with the rest of the Methodist preachers, he was accustomed up to that time to receive the sacrament at the hands of Episcopal ministers. He was thirty-nine years of age, and had been preaching in America for thirteen years. After his election as general superintendent he was privately ordained deacon and on the next day publicly ordained an elder. After their consecration they soon called themselves "bishops," for which they were rebuked by Wesley, but without effect. Asbury was now a bishop.

"The rude and storm-vexed times required
A pilot formed by nature to command."

Upon such a man the choice had fallen.

He was the first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church ordained in the United States. Coke never identified himself exclusively with American Methodism and after a time returned to England. Asbury is regarded as the pioneer bishop of Methodism. He was more, for he was the first bishop of any church consecrated on American soil. In 1783, however, a little company of ten out of fourteen Episcopal ministers met in solemn conclave in a rude and lonely cottage in the small town of Woodbury in Connecticut. They chose Samuel Seabury to be their bishop and at their request he went to England to seek consecration. The archbishop and bishops of England declined to consecrate him. The war was over, but the king was still unwilling that a bishop should be consecrated for America who came with no credentials from the authorities of the state. And so it was that Seabury, rejected in London, went over to Aberdeen, and in November, 1784, a few weeks before the consecration of Asbury, was consecrated in an upper room in the rectory of the proscribed

and persecuted Episcopal Church of Scotland. The consecration of these two men closes one of the most interesting chapters in American ecclesiastical history. Seabury was a graduate of Yale, and had studied medicine and theology in Scotland, and before he was chosen bishop had had the degree of Doctor of Divinity conferred upon him by Oxford University. As a scholar he was Asbury's superior. But in piety, zeal, and labor and consecration, and in effective service, no man was superior to Francis Asbury.

Five years later, in 1789, John Carroll, of Baltimore, a graduate of a Jesuit College in Brussels and the cousin of Charles Carroll, the richest man in America, was appointed the first Roman Catholic bishop of the United States.

Asbury was commanding in appearance, although in stature he was only five feet and nine inches tall. He weighed one hundred and fifty pounds. His features were rugged, his face furrowed deep with wrinkles. His nose was prominent, his mouth large. His eyes were of a bluish cast, and are said to have been so piercing that it seemed to those

upon whom he fixed his glance as if he were reading their inmost thoughts. His voice was full-toned, clear, and under perfect control. At times it sounded in tones of thunder that caused the bravest to shudder and the most profligate to tremble. Again it was so full of tender pathos that all eyes filled with tears. As became his office and calling and according to the fashion of the times, he wore knee breeches, and sometimes silver shoe buckles, and a single-breasted frock coat buttoned to the throat. Trousers began to be worn about the time Mr. Jefferson became President, but Asbury would have none of them, and never became reconciled to the innovation. He had little patience and very unhappy moments when preachers appeared before him clad in what he regarded as a modern abomination. He wore a broad-brimmed hat with a very low crown, and his costume much resembled that worn by the Quakers. In preaching he continued for years to wear the black gown, cassock, and band which he wore in England, and which Wesley always wore. It was some time after his Episcopal ordination that he consented to

lay them aside. Jesse Lee had seriously objected to their use and was grieved with Asbury. He thought plainness of dress and simplicity of manner would make it easier to reach the common people. In the changed conditions of the life of to-day Methodist preachers might well resume the gown that Asbury and Whatcoat laid aside.

No man could be in Asbury's presence without being impressed with profound respect. His natural dignity and the greatness of his character distinguished him among men. He was gifted with fine conversational powers, and possessed a cheerful humor. He had a social charm that made him a welcome guest in every social circle. But at times a constitutional melancholy depressed him, due no doubt to the bodily ills which continually afflicted him.

Abel Stevens, in speaking of the early Methodists in America, says: "Among these pioneers, Asbury, by common consent, stood first and chief. There was something in his person, his eye, his mien, and in the music of his voice which interested all who saw and heard him. He possessed much natural wit,

and was capable of the severest satire; but grace and good sense so far predominated that he never descended to anything beneath the dignity of a man and a Christian minister. In prayer he excelled. 'He prayed,' says Garrettson, 'the best and prayed the most of any man I ever knew.' "

"I purpose to rise at four o'clock," Asbury writes in the *Journal*, "as often as I can and spend two hours in prayer and meditation, to take my room at eight and pray and meditate an hour." "My desire is that prayer should mix with every thought, every word, every action, that all might ascend as a holy, acceptable sacrifice to God." Another time he writes: "My present mode of conduct is as follows: to read one hundred pages a day, usually to pray in public five times a day, to preach in the open air every other day, to lecture in prayer meeting every evening." It is said that whenever he ate he was accustomed to kneel in prayer, and that he closed the meal as he began it.

Asbury established in America the work of the circuit riders. He believed that the life and power of Methodism depended upon the

itinerancy. That feature of our polity was disappearing at the time he arrived in America. If he had not withstood the preachers, the whole Methodist movement in the New World would have soon ended. In those times Methodism and a settled ministry were incompatible. He was thoroughly grounded in his belief that a Methodist preacher should be as movable "as a soldier on the land or a sailor on the sea." By keeping them in motion he kept them energetic. It was a wise economy, good for the preachers and good for the societies. It was a military drill for the preachers, and it enabled the societies to have the advantages of the varied gifts of different preachers. The indisposition of the preachers to travel much was a sore affliction to him. I read from his Journal an entry he made upon the subject: "I have not yet the thing which I seek, a circulation of the preachers to avoid partiality and popularity. However, I am fixed to the Methodist plan, and do what I do faithfully as unto God. I expect trouble is at hand. That I expected when I left England and I am willing to suffer, yea, to die, rather than betray so good

a cause by any means. It will be a hard matter to stand against all opposition,

‘As an iron pillar strong
And steadfast as a wall of brass;’

but through Christ strengthening me I can do all things. My brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities, but I will show them the way. I have nothing to seek but the glory of God, nothing to fear but his displeasure. I have come to this country with an upright intention, and through the grace of God I will make it appear. I am determined that no man shall bias me with soft words and fair speeches; nor will I ever fear the face of man, or know any man after the flesh, if I beg my bread from door to door; but, whomsoever I please or displease, I will be faithful to God, to the people, and to my own soul.” These were brave words and he meant every one of them.

The Methodist Church is the result of missions. And it has itself always been a missionary church. The author of *Ecce Homo* wrote that Christianity would sacrifice its divinity if it abandoned its missionary char-

acter. The Missionary Society of our church was organized in 1819. This was three years after Asbury's death. But it is a mistake to date the origin of our missionary work from the time of the organization of that society. Asbury was the originator of Methodist missions in America. He sent out his preachers into the farthest and most destitute frontier settlements and then collected money all over the country for their support. He did more and sent missionaries into Nova Scotia and Canada. The Mite Fund which bears his name he established to send out German, French, and Spanish missionaries and to provide for the necessities of preachers in want.

The first Sunday school on this continent was established by Asbury in 1786 in Hanover County, Virginia, in the house of Thomas Crenshaw. He had previously had incorporated into the Discipline the following paragraph: "Where there are ten children whose parents are in society, meet them at least an hour every week." Later he added the following admonition: "Let us labor as the heart and soul of one man to

establish Sunday Schools in or near the place of public worship. Let persons be appointed by the bishops, elders, deacons, or preachers to teach *gratis* all that will attend and have a capacity to learn, from six o'clock in the morning until ten, and from two o'clock in the afternoon until six, where it does not interfere with public worship." The Methodist Episcopal Church to-day has the largest Sunday school constituency of any church in the world. It numbers more than four million scholars. What hath God wrought! The Sunday schools hold the key to the church's future.

The great problem of Methodism in our day is its unification. That Methodism in the United States is still divided is a source of the most profound regret. Asbury at all times stood for a united Methodism and opposed with all his influence the divisions in the church which at different periods of his career were threatened. In a letter to Jesse Lee he wrote: "You and every man that thinks properly will find it will never do to divide the North from the South. Methodism is union all over; union in exchange of

preachers; union in exchange of sentiments; union in exchange of interest; we must draw resources from the center to the circumference.”

Bishop Asbury was not a parliamentarian. He had no use for rules of order. Bishop McKendree, who was elected in 1808, was the first bishop who conducted the business of a Conference according to parliamentary law. When the General Conference of 1812 met, McKendree formulated and presented an order of business. To Asbury this was a new idea, and after McKendree had read his proposal, Asbury, venerable in years and patriarchal in appearance, immediately arose and addressed him saying, “I have something to say to you before the Conference.” Thereupon McKendree arose to his feet and the two men stood facing each other. Asbury continued: “This is a new thing; I never did business in this way, and why is this new thing introduced?” To which McKendree replied: “You are our *father*, we are your sons; you never had need of it. I am only a *brother* and I have need of it.” Asbury said no more,

but with a smile resumed his seat. So impressed was Asbury by the superior manner in which McKendree conducted the business that he seldom thereafter occupied the chair of the Conference. As a presiding officer McKendree perhaps has never been surpassed by any of his successors.

Asbury's peculiar talent was in his ability for governing the preachers. He had a genius for administration second only to that of Wesley. This was his chief distinction. He knew all of his preachers, and without consulting anyone he sent them where they could best do their work. In Dr. Buckley's opinion, "No general ever stationed his troops with greater skill than Asbury displayed in the adjustment of ministerial supplies to the infant societies." He not only had the genius to lead, but he had the will to govern, and he exercised it. In matters ecclesiastical Asbury, as well as Wesley, believed in and enforced discipline. He administered with an iron hand and an indomitable will the powers with which the church had invested him.

Asbury was not an orator, as Bascom was.

Few preachers in any church have been. When Bascom spoke no edifice could hold half of the multitude who flocked to hear him. Many a time Bascom reached his pulpit by being passed through a window at the back of it. His would-be hearers filled the windows and blocked the doors and stood far out beyond the reach of his voice. Bascom's manner, his voice, his words, charmed and held spellbound his vast congregations "as the Ancient Mariner held the wedding guest." Asbury was, however, a dignified and impressive preacher and always terribly in earnest. Jesse Lee rated him an "excellent" preacher. Boehm, who heard him over fifteen hundred times, thought him a "superior" preacher, and said his sermons were scripturally rich and that he brought out of his treasury things old and new. He thought him great at camp meetings, on funeral occasions, and at ordinations. He had heard him preach fifty ordination sermons, and said that they were among the most impressive he had ever heard. President Tipple, in his delightful book, says that there were occasions when, under the rush of Asbury's utterance,

people sprang to their feet as if summoned to the judgment of God.

For fifty-four years Asbury was a preacher. Throughout all these years he took advantage of every opportunity to preach that was presented. He preached in the streets, in the fields, in private houses, in courthouses, "behind the barracks" to the soldiers, "at the gallows to a vast multitude," from "a wagon at the execution" of criminals, and wherever it was possible to get people to listen. He strove incessantly for perfection. He constantly preached upon it. "I feel it my duty to speak chiefly of perfection and, above all, to strive to attain that which I preach. I am divinely impressed to preach sanctification in every sermon." At times he struck terror into the hearts of those who heard him. He wrote referring to one of his own sermons: "It was an awful talk, and the people were alarmed; let them look to it." "It is our duty, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, to declare that if they die in their sins they can expect nothing but hell and damnation." His one thought was to

induce trembling penitents to lay hold on Jesus as their Saviour, that through his atoning blood they might be saved. It may be said of him, as it was of Jesse Lee, that his eloquence was the simple eloquence of truth "unadorned with any other flowers than such as he had gathered from the garden of the Lord, the Holy Scriptures." If to-day we felicitate ourselves that "Sinai no longer belches forth flame and fury," we must remember that in estimating Asbury he must be judged by the standards of his age. If he aroused the fears of his hearers, it was because he thought there was no other way of reaching them. And if he aroused fear, did he not also allay it? The message he delivered was the Great Salvation.

Salvation! O the joyful sound!

What pleasure to our ears!

A sovereign balm for every wound,

A cordial for our fears.

Lord Rosebery, speaking of the weakness of Robert Burns and the spot on the poet's mantle, said that we all have something to be grateful for in the weaknesses of great men. Mankind is helped in its prog-

ress almost as much by the study of imperfection as by the contemplation of perfection. We cannot suppose Asbury was entirely free from human weaknesses. That he was free from personal ambition must be conceded. That he was autocratic is also true. That he did not always control his feelings is shown by the following incident: In one of the Conferences Jesse Lee spoke in advocacy of a certain matter and saw from the expression on Asbury's face that he was against him. Thereupon Lee, addressing the bishop, asked whether he, Lee, had common sense. Asbury answered, "You have uncommon sense." "Then," said Lee, "if I have uncommon sense, I ought to have an uncommon hearing." Whereupon Asbury is said to have turned his back and to have written letters until Lee finished his speech. And Asbury and Coke for a short time so disagreed that it was almost necessary that they should not meet.

In our day there are some ministers whose purses are not empty of gold or silver. The Archbishop of Canterbury is given Lambeth Palace and a salary of seventy-five thousand

dollars a year. The bishops of the Church of England receive fifty thousand dollars a year. In our country the same munificence is not extended to the bishops of any of the churches. There may be a few gifted ministers who receive eighteen thousand dollars a year. But the average salary of a preacher in our church is about one thousand dollars a year. Our people too often forget that it was said:

“Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

Martin Luther devised what he called “a good book for the laity.” It contained a series of wood cuts depicting contrasts between Christ and the pope. One was Christ driving the money changers out of the temple, and the pope selling indulgences with piles of money before him. In America in the days of Francis Asbury a Methodist preacher never had but a few dollars in his pocket.

When Christ called his twelve disciples and gave them power against unclean spirits and sent them forth, he bade them to provide neither gold or silver, nor scrip for their journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves. The disciples heard and obeyed, and so did Paul. So did Saint Francis of Assisi when he made that pilgrimage to Rome and flung all that he possessed on the altar of Saint Peter's and joined himself to a troop of beggars. The great Franciscan order which Assisi founded obeyed. So did Wesley and Asbury. And so have other men among the living and the dead to whom mankind owe reverence and honor. It is well for the world that such men have lived. Theirs have been splendid souls. Their only ambition has been to serve. Their ideas of duty have not been measured by a gold standard.

Asbury's salary, even after he became a bishop, was sixty-four dollars a year and traveling expenses. It was later increased to eighty dollars. In 1804 he notes in his Journal: "The superintendent bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America being reduced to two dollars, was obliged to

make his wants known." In 1806 he was attending the Western Conference and there he found some of the preachers poorer than himself. And he writes: "The brethren were in want and could not suit themselves, so I parted with my watch and my cloak and my shirt." On one occasion a friend of Asbury's wanted to borrow or beg fifty dollars from him. Commenting on the fact, Asbury writes: "He might as well have asked me for Peru. I showed him all the money I had in the world—about twelve dollars—and gave him five. Strange that neither my friends nor my enemies will believe that I neither have nor seek bags of money. Well, they shall believe by demonstration what I have ever been striving to prove, that I will live and die a poor man." He was laying up his treasure in heaven.

He wore his clothes threadbare and often they were shabby in appearance. The fact needs no apology. They were as good as his salary allowed. He took no thought for his life, what he should eat or what he should drink; nor yet for his body, what he should put on. He had his wish, and lived and died

a poor man. There was not a day after he came to America when he could not truthfully have said,

“No foot of land do I possess,
No cottage in this wilderness,
A poor wayfaring man.”

In one of his immortal tragedies Sophocles exclaims “Who can tell whether to live may not be to die, and to die may not be to live?” In contemplating the life of Francis Asbury we can realize that the thought of Sophocles is true. If Asbury had been content to remain in England, had led the life of a selfish man contented with conditions as he found them, we should not to-day commemorate his death. We are here because he left home, father, mother, friends, and native land, and here in America, without earthly recompense, endured for more than forty-five years the privations and labors which wore him out and broke him down. His whole life was one of utmost self-sacrifice. Trevelyan, in his *American Revolution*, says of Asbury that he was a man who did not seek and who led a life which was above worldly praise. No

finer tribute could be paid to any man than that. As his life passes in review before us, we realize how true is the saying of Hugh Price Hughes that "Not self-assertion, but limitless self-suppression, is the secret of life." The greatest characters are the most unselfish. All sin and all misery in the ultimate analysis have their root in selfishness.

Asbury never married. In his *Journal* in 1804, when he was fifty-nine years old, he made this entry: "If I should die in celibacy, which I think quite probable, I give the following reasons for what can scarcely be called my choice." He then gave an account of his life and said: "At forty-nine I was ordained superintendent bishop in America. Among the duties imposed upon me by my office was that of traveling extensively, and I could hardly expect to find a woman with grace enough to enable her to live but one week out of the fifty-two with her husband. . . . It is neither just nor generous. I may add to this that I had little money, and with this little administered to the necessities of a beloved mother until I was fifty-seven. . . . It is my duty now to bestow

the pittance I may have to spare upon the widows and fatherless girls and poor married men.”

In his Journal of July 12, 1805, Asbury wrote: “Marriage is honorable in all, but to me it is a ceremony awful as death. Well may it be so, when I calculate we have lost the traveling labors of two hundred of the best men in America, or the world, by marriage and consequent location.”

The early itinerants as a rule did not marry. Those who did usually ceased preaching. In the General Conference of 1783 seventy out of eighty were unmarried. When one married he usually ceased to be a traveling preacher.

In those days the wife of a traveling preacher was paid a salary. In the Minutes of the General Conference of 1796, Question 21 reads: “What directions shall be given concerning the salaries of the wives of traveling preachers?” The answer is: “The wife of every traveling preacher shall have the same claim to a yearly salary of sixty-four dollars as a traveling preacher.”

Asbury's character was heroic. Luther

went to the Diet of Worms believing that he was going to his death. Asbury with a like courage would have made the same journey if similarly summoned. If the necessity which confronted Luther had confronted Asbury, it cannot be doubted what his answer would have been. "I cannot and will not retract anything, for to act against conscience is unsafe and unholy. I can do nought else. Here stand I. God help me."

If he had been imprisoned for years in the dungeons of the Inquisition, as Bruno was, and then brought forth to die, we have no doubt that as the fire was kindled about him he too would have declined to recant and would have died an equally willing martyr.

In his *Winning of the West* Mr. Roosevelt has paid an appreciative tribute to the early circuit riders of the frontier settlements. To them, he says, the country owes an immense debt; that "Wherever there was a group of log cabins thither some Methodist circuit rider made his way, or there some Baptist preacher took up his abode." He points out that they yielded scores of martyrs, nameless and unknown men who

perished at the hands of the savages, or by sickness or by flood or storm. They had to face not only Indians but white inhabitants who sometimes were so lawless and godless that they were more to be feared. These "nameless" and "unknown" men deserve to be remembered here this day. Like Asbury, they are worthy of our honor and reverence for their heroism and self-sacrifice. What they planted was the handful of corn upon the mountains from which we have so abundantly reaped. But the greatest of the circuit riders was Francis Asbury.

Asbury preached about sixteen thousand five hundred sermons, traveled about two hundred and seventy thousand miles, most of it on horseback, some of it on foot, presided in no less than two hundred and twenty-four Annual Conferences, and ordained more than four thousand preachers. In addition he was writing a thousand letters a year. He records in his Journal: "I suppose that I must write nearly a thousand in a year."

No man of his age traveled as much or as far as Asbury. He rode from fifteen to fifty miles a day, averaging six thousand miles a

year. His travels took him from the Atlantic to the Mississippi and from the Gulf of Mexico to the Saint Lawrence. He crossed the Alleghenies sixty times. With the spirit of his Master and the zeal of an apostle he swept through the continent with tireless energy. No danger intimidated him. No obstacle diverted him. No suffering overcame him. He traversed forests, penetrated the wilderness, climbed mountains, and followed the trail of savage hunters and the track of the wild beasts. He slept frequently on the ground, and sometimes in the rain, and sometimes among the rocks in the mountains, with no covering but the sky, and sometimes on the floor of a lonely and deserted cabin.

O, far from home thy footsteps stray;
Christ is the life, and Christ the way,
And Christ the light;

.
The rising tempest sweeps the sky;
The rains descend, the winds are high;
The waters swell, and death and fear
Beset thy path, nor refuge near.

Like Paul, he was in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils

by his countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils among false brethren. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

His last sermon was preached at Richmond when he was so weak that he had to be carried in the arms of his friends from the carriage to the church. He was so ill that he preached sitting on a table. The sermon was nearly an hour in length, and the large company listened with tearful eyes and throbbing hearts. They knew it was the end. They carried him back to his carriage and took him to the house of an old friend at Shenandoah, twenty miles from Fredericksburg. And there, the battle fought, the victory won, this old prophet and priest and servant of God was numbered with the dead. The messenger of the Lord came to him on March 31, 1816.

Tranquil amid alarms,
It found him on the field,
A veteran, slumbering on his arms,
Beneath his red-cross shield.

His sword was in his hand,
Still warm with recent fight,
Ready that moment, at command
Through rock and steel to smite.

The pains of death are past,
Labor and sorrow cease;
And, life's long warfare closed at last,
His soul is found in peace.

Soldier of Christ, well done!

It is impossible to say how long after death the names of men will remain in the memory of the living. In the confusion wrought by time names once thought immortal sink into oblivion. They are as a wind that passeth away and which cometh not again. However, I cannot but believe that the name of Francis Asbury, what he achieved, what he endured, what he sacrificed, will be acclaimed in the coming centuries and so long as our Methodism stands. The years and the events of the century which has passed have not obscured him. Do we not this day see him? Are not his wan and furrowed face and his venerable form still visible?

I apply to him with slight change words once spoken with less justification of another, and say, that as he who looks upon the heavens beholds a constellation gleaming in the light of a single star, so he who recalls the past of Methodism in America, the labors, sorrows, self-sacrifice, and sometimes the almost martyrdom of its sons, will find rising to his lips the honored name of Francis Asbury.

THEN AND NOW

BISHOP JOSEPH F. BERRY

FRANCIS ASBURY—THE BISHOP

BISHOP FRANK M. BRISTOL

FRANCIS ASBURY—ITINERANT

BISHOP FREDERICK D. LEETE

Addresses Delivered before the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Saratoga Springs, New York, May, 1916, on the Occasion of the Commemoration of the Centennial of the Death of Bishop Asbury.

THEN AND NOW

PERSONALITY is the greatest thing in the world. History is but the biography of great men. This republic was builded around forceful personalities. From them our national life took on its ideals and form. The character and aspirations of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, with others, have been indelibly stamped upon our institutions. This is equally true of our church, whose beginning was contemporaneous with that of the republic. American Methodism is the incarnation of the ideals and spirit of the Wesleys, of Asbury, Lee, Garrettson, McKendree, Dickins, Cooper, Bascome, McClintock, Simpson, Galloway, and the imperial Warren. Being dead they yet speak.

The dominating personality of American Methodism during its formative period was Francis Asbury. His influence among the pioneer preachers and people was almost supreme. His spirituality, heroism, evangelistic passion, and sacrificial service became their chief human inspiration. His type be-

came the type of the infant church. That type was perpetuated through the years, and though somewhat modified by changed conditions, is with us yet. Francis Asbury has been dead for a hundred years, but he is living still.

Asbury lived in pioneer days. The republic was just struggling into life. The sparse population occupied a narrow fringe of territory along the Atlantic seaboard. Beyond this fringe was a vast wilderness. Public roads were mere trails through virgin forests. Rivers were unbridged. Railroads were unknown. The average house was a cabin. There was no telegraph. Most of the people were strangers in a strange land. Nearly all were poor. But how marvelous the changes which a hundred years have wrought!

The boundaries of the republic have been pushed westward to the sea and southward to the Rio Grande. All sections of our territory have been tied together by bands of steel. The iron horse steams everywhere. Our territory sustains a population of a hundred millions of souls. Wealth has increased.

Our bankers are now the bankers of the world. Colleges and universities dot the land. Great institutions of beneficence and other concrete expressions of the highest forms of Christian conscience and culture greet you at every turn.

And the changes in the status of Methodism are quite as amazing. A while ago I traveled the Sam's Creek circuit in Maryland. I visited the spot where Robert Strawbridge, standing under the great oak, preached the gospel to eager throngs. I went to the old Evans meetinghouse, where, in the earliest days, the settlers gathered for worship. I lingered some time in the prophet's chamber of the old Warfield home, where Asbury often lodged and where McKendree wrote large portions of his journal.

Returning to Baltimore, I stood for a time in reverie at the site of Lovely Lane chapel, where assembled the Christmas Conference. In fancy I saw the historic group. There was Coke, sensitive, cultured, rhetorical. There also was Asbury, modest, heroic, and aflame with the fever of the evangelist. With these leaders were twenty-three intrep-

id pioneers, half of them scarcely more than boys. At that time we had a membership of fourteen thousand. There was no Book Concern. There was no Missionary Society. The leaders had scarcely caught a vision of the coming educational victories of their church. How amazing the change! That one Conference has multiplied into two hundred and forty. The twenty-three preachers have expanded into an itinerant arm forty-six thousand strong. The fourteen thousand members have grown to eight millions. We have an equal number of Sunday school scholars. We have a million of members in our Epworth Leagues. Those in the republic who may be classed as Methodist members and adherents must make up a company of twenty-five millions of souls. Well may we adapt the words of our own matchless singer and apply them to the growth of the Methodist movement on this continent:

When at first the work began,
Small and feeble was its day;
Now the word doth swiftly run,
Now it wins its widening way;

More and more it spreads and grows,
Ever mighty to prevail;
Sin's strongholds it now o'erthrows,
Shakes the trembling gates of hell.

There are other contrasts: Among the unique experiences of my life in Philadelphia are my visits to the old cathedral of our Methodism, Saint George's Church, where Asbury preached his first sermon after landing in the New World. I particularly love to linger in the famous "Conference room," where the first American Methodist Conference was held, in July, 1773, with an attendance of seven preachers. The room has been preserved, so far as possible, in its original state. The plates and mugs used to pass the bread and water at the first love feast are still there. And certain entries in a well-preserved account book suggest a marvelous change in the attitude of Methodist preachers concerning liquor and its use. The old book actually shows that no very modest amount of ale and stout was ordered for the occasion. In those days a teetotaler was considered a fanatic, and the consumption of a moderate amount of toddy was not regarded as incom-

patible with high spiritual attainment. It is not so now. In our day the Annual Conference has become the chief dynamo of the temperance reform. So intense is the conviction of the Methodist preacher concerning the rum abomination, and so susceptible is he to an emotional appeal, that the dullest official speech-maker, failing to arouse interest in behalf of his cause, is sure to turn aside temporarily to the temperance question, and seldom fails to start a tempest of enthusiasm which carries him triumphantly across the barren spot in his discourse, and makes his effort a rhetorical success. If we have forty-six thousand Methodist preachers to-day, we have forty-six thousand zealous, uncompromising enemies of the liquor curse. And if we have eight millions of members, we furnish out of that total the most numerous, the most consistent, the most intense, the most dreaded, and the most damaging force in all the republic in the fierce fight to outlaw and forever annihilate the American saloon.

There are still other contrasts. Methodist churches in Bishop Asbury's time were ex-

cessively plain. Interior walls were merely whitewashed. The floors were uncarpeted. The pulpit was high, resting on a single pillar and reached by a flight of winding stairs. The Discipline of that time contained the question, "Is there any exception to the rule, 'let the men and women sit apart'?" Answer: "There is no exception. Let them sit apart in all the churches." Into these unadorned churches came men and women of utter plainness of dress, the men with straight coats and white cravats without knot in front; the women with coal-scuttle bonnets without flower or feather or ribbon. What a striking contrast to the congregations which now assemble in our elegant churches, or even those in attendance at the General Conference at Saratoga! Yet, who will say that there was more real religion then than now?

I remember that Daniel De Motte was once arraigned by the Indiana Conference for having come to the session wearing a beard. It was said that Edward R. Ames lost an election to the General Conference because he wore side whiskers. That same

Conference passed a resolution instructing all the preachers to wear straight-breasted and shad-bellied coats, and trousers with broad falls.

I recall the horrified exclamation of Mr. Asbury when he visited Newport, Rhode Island, and first saw the new church edifice. "A steeple and a bell," he blurted out, "a steeple and a bell; the next thing will be an organ and a choir; then farewell to Methodism!" Well, the steeple and the bell were followed by the organ and the choir, and the church really survived the shock. And we shall still face the sunrise, and eagerly grasp every new method and appliance that promises to make the dear old church more efficient amid the new conditions which constantly confront her.

But why are we holding commemorative exercises to-day? Why have we turned aside from the urgent business of the session to spend the hour thinking of our illustrious father, who one hundred years ago went up from a life of marvelous toil to his coronation? It is not to indulge ourselves in fulsome eulogy. It is not because we hope to

add luster to his name, but, rather, that, in the presence of this representative body of world Methodism, we may emphasize again the spiritual endowments and the unique forms of service which made his life so great; and also to remind ourselves that if Methodism is to win large victories amid the complex conditions of modern life, she must resolutely hold to certain fundamentals of doctrine and life which the fathers believed were vital. I mention but two of these in as many brief paragraphs.

First, I remember their loyalty to the Word. Faith in the authority and integrity of the Book was absolute. Doubt seldom dimmed their vision nor dampened their zeal. This explains the positive note in their preaching, and accounts for the fact that the pulpit was always on fire. The teaching of the Book about the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and retribution for the finally impenitent, the personal deity of Jesus, the atonement, regeneration, the witness of the Spirit, and an uttermost salvation through the cleansing of the blood—these fundamentals were accepted without question, and declared

to the people without apology or modification. That is why sinners trembled in their congregations, and accounts for the fact that in almost every meeting held on Sunday or on week day, people were convicted of sin and gloriously saved from its power. We who are the spiritual sons and daughters of Asbury must not let go our absolute faith in the old Book. We have come to a day of questioning. Men are deciphering hieroglyphics, and studying clay tablets, and uncovering ruins, and exploring tombs, and sifting dust heaps, and are going with their microscopes over every chapter and verse to see if they cannot find a flaw. This scholarship has proclaimed practical evolution. It has sought to eliminate the supernatural, and has transferred into mere myths some of the tallest personalities of the Scriptures.

Now, I am quite sure that our church should continue to be hospitable toward a scholarship that is reverent and constructive, and which comes to the examination of the Book with uncovered head and unsandaled feet—with prayer for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, whose function it is to

read into all truths. But for the sake of the kingdom of God on earth, and the kingdom of evangelical Christianity which we so largely represent, we should be most inhospitable to all biblical criticism that is irreverent, ruthless, and destructive.

Dear brethren, now that the scare occasioned by irreverent attacks upon the Bible has passed away, is it not astonishing how little hurt has been done! The dear old Book has come through the hot fire unharmed. Historically it has stood the test. Abraham still stands tall before the ages. Moses is still the incomparable lawgiver. Isaiah still looks forward with rapturous gaze to the manger and the cross. Daniel still stands in his lot and place. Ruth still teaches her golden lessons of devotion and love. And Jonah, though he has had a rather stormy time of it, has not yet faded into allegorical mist. And the doctrines of the Book are just as they were. The story of the fall, the promise of redemption, the plan of salvation, the virgin birth, the miracles, the sacrificial death, the empty tomb, the supernatural ascension, and the tongues of fire are all there.

Hammer away, ye hostile bands;
Your hammers break, God's anvil stands.

Second. It will sound very trite to you, but I must say it, the chief business of Mr. Asbury and his colaborers was that of evangelism. They went everywhere delivering the evangelistic message, and telling their experience. They preached for souls. They prayed for souls. They went from house to house seeking souls. Winning men back to God, their ministry was a success. Falling short in that sublime mission, they were humiliated by a sense of failure. That still is the chief business of the Methodists. We are doing other things very well. We are building great churches. We are endowing colleges. We are strengthening our missionary enterprises at home and abroad. We are establishing hospitals, and orphanages, and homes for the aged. We are developing great new forces in our deaconess movement, our Epworth Leagues, and the marvelous Bible class organizations.

But if we do the normal work of Methodism, we must regard all these agencies as evangelistic agencies. The Methodist min-

ister has been the chief evangelist of the century. *He must maintain that preeminence.* No tent nor tabernacle evangelism must be permitted to force him to surrender his leadership. Any form of evangelism that discounts the pastor's evangelistic commission and responsibility is a menace to our church. We must guard against superficiality. It will be no advantage to us to crowd our churches with unconverted members. Sinners must still be called to repentance. They must still cry to God for mercy. They must still be regenerated by the Holy Ghost, and must still have the definite witness in their souls that they are born of God. There will not be uniformity in external expression, of course, but there must be a blessed uniformity in the reality of a victorious heart experience.

The Father hears him pray,
 His dear Anointed One;
 He cannot turn away
 The presence of His Son;
 His Spirit answers to the blood,
 And tells me I am born of God.

I hear the tramp, tramp, tramp of the

Wesleyan armies of the world. I lift my eyes, and behold the plains and the valleys are filled with swiftly moving columns, their banners waving in the breeze. They come from everywhere. From the mountains and valleys of the sunset coast. From the fruitful prairies of the Middle West. From the denser populations of the East—scenes of Asbury's toils and conquests. From Mexico and the Latin republics to the south. From under blue Canadian skies. From England and her dependencies around the earth. From Norway, and Sweden, and Denmark, and Russia, and Germany, and Switzerland, and Hungary, and Italy, and France. From vast, sable Africa. From mighty India. From China, and Japan, and Korea, and the islands of the seas.

What an army! What an army! And the long lines of our sacramental hosts seem ready to move out to the conquest of the world.

In the name of Protestant Christianity which looks to us still for aggressive leadership; in the name of every righteous cause whose destiny, in this crucial hour, seems to

be trembling in the balance; in the name of youthful millions who pass through an enemy's country, and whose ranks must be fearfully decimated by the subtle warfare of a hellish foe; in the name of our veterans, scarred and bleeding from wounds received upon a hundred battlefields; by the memory of our fallen heroes; yea, by the memory of the whitened face, and parched lips, and quivering limbs, and breaking heart, and dying agonies of the Son of God, I speak unto you soldiers marshaled under the banner of the Wesleys and of Asbury—I cry—"Forward march!"

Once the glorious morn has broken, who shall say
 What the unimagined glories of the day,
 What the evils that shall perish in its ray;
 Aid the dawning tongue and pen,
 Aid it hosts of royal men,
 Aid it paper, aid it type,
 Aid it for the hour is ripe,
 And our earnest must not slacken into play,
 Sons of Wesley, eager, earnest, lead the way!

FRANCIS ASBURY—THE BISHOP

AN hundred wonderful years have passed since Bishop Asbury closed his apostolic labors. Through that stirring century of time the genius and spirit of the greatest itinerant bishop of all time has been felt with an inspiring power in the mighty evangelistic movement which has characterized the religious awakening and progress of the modern world. The close of the eighteenth and opening of the nineteenth century were characterized by the appearance of four tremendous history-making forces—the Declaration of Independence, the steam engine, applied electricity, and Methodism. No philosophy of American history can be adequate that fails to recognize these political, economic, scientific, and spiritual forces as the most potent factors in our national development. What Washington was to the Revolution, what Watt or Fulton was to the steam motor, and what Franklin was to the application of electricity that was Francis Asbury to the evangelistic movement which has culminated in a world-wide Methodism.

England's most valuable contribution to the New World was Francis Asbury. Nor do we forget that there were giants in those days—the days of Washington, Napoleon, and Wellington, the days of Chatham, Fox, and Burke, the days of Wesley, Fletcher, and Coke, the days of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and of the framers of the Constitution of the United States, the days of the heroes of Concord and Bunker Hill, of Saratoga and Yorktown, of Trafalgar and Waterloo. And yet Francis Asbury stood among the great of that great time to be seen by all the future as second to none in helping to shape the very destiny of Christendom. If the rise and development of Methodism in England and America have contributed as largely to the progress of Anglo-Saxon civilization as the most authoritative historians would have us believe, then Francis Asbury will stand beside the supreme men and one of the tallest in the temple of enduring fame.

It is sufficient in our estimate of the character and abilities of Asbury to be assured that John Wesley, that astute ecclesiastical

statesman, found in him the promise of the superb and consecrated leadership which was to blaze a way through the frontiers of the world for the triumphant advance of Methodism and of every form of evangelical and evangelistic Christianity. At the age of twenty-six and the year of his arrival in this country he was appointed by Mr. Wesley as his assistant in the American work. This position was what might be called a lay episcopacy. Mr. Wesley, himself, exercised all the functions of a bishop and was that, except in name. As his assistant, and after Rankin's return to England as his general assistant, Asbury, in the language of Bishop Coke and of Asbury himself, "for many years before exercised every branch of the episcopal office excepting that of ordination." The question was asked in the Conference of 1779: "Ought not Brother Asbury to act as general assistant in America?" The answer was, "He ought."

In a sense, therefore, Asbury was the first bishop of American Methodism. So abundant were his labors in this office of what may be called assistant bishop, so profound

was his piety, so absolutely self-sacrificing was his ministry of toil and suffering, so strict and yet eminently just were his discipline and administration, so evangelistic were his methods of religious propaganda, and so manifestly superlative was his genius for leadership, that when Mr. Wesley appointed him joint superintendent with Bishop Coke over our brethren in North America, he was with Dr. Coke received by a vote of the First General Conference, and that unanimously.

It was at this, the famous Christmas Conference held in Lovely Lane Chapel, Baltimore, in 1784, that the strength and independence of Asbury's character were revealed. Surprised as he was at the intelligence that came to him and the American Methodists in the letter of Mr. Wesley appointing him associate bishop or general superintendent with Bishop Coke, he refused to accept the high office except by the unanimous vote of the preachers. He said to Bishop Coke, "We will call the preachers together and the voice of the preachers shall be to me the voice of God." Moreover, his further answer was, "If the preachers unani-

mously choose me, I shall not act in the capacity I have hitherto done by Mr. Wesley's appointment." Clearly understanding his position, strong, independent, thoroughly American in spirit, as it was, the General Conference on Monday, December 26, by a unanimous vote elected him superintendent, or bishop, of the newly organized Methodist Episcopal Church. Swiftly was Asbury inducted into the orders of the ministry, and into the episcopacy. It will be remembered that up to that Christmas Conference Asbury had not been an ordained minister. Through all those previous eighteen or twenty years of his ministerial activity, he had been no more nor less than a lay preacher. But now that Coke has come with the authority of ordination and that the preachers have agreed to form themselves into an Episcopal Church, and to have superintendents, elders, and deacons, and that the General Conference has elected Asbury to deacon's and elder's orders, he is ordained a deacon on Saturday, or Christmas day, ordained an elder on Sunday, and elected and consecrated a bishop on Monday.

We use here the term "consecrated" as conveying at the present time the true meaning of the service by which an elder elected to the episcopacy is inducted into that office. The fathers often used the terms "set apart," "consecrated" and "ordained" as synonymous. There can be no doubt that Asbury agreed with Wesley and Coke and with the best scholars of his time that the episcopacy is an office and not an order. He, therefore, cared nothing for the fiction of "apostolic succession," and even treated in a witty, if not humorous, vein, the charge made against him of possessing tyrannical powers as a Methodist bishop.

He writes in his diary: "I will make a few observations upon the ignorance of foolish men who will rail against our church government. The Methodists acknowledge no superiority but what is founded on seniority, election, and long and faithful service. For myself, I pity those who cannot distinguish between a pope of Rome and an old worn man of about sixty years who has the power given him of riding five thousand miles a year (on horseback) at a salary

of eighty dollars through summer's heat and winter's cold, traveling in all weather, preaching in all places, his covering from rain often but a blanket; the severest sharpener of his wit, hunger—from fast voluntary and involuntary; his best fare for six months of the twelve coarse kindness; and his reward suspicion, envy, and murmurings all the year round.”

While it is true that it was not until 1787 that superintendents were first called bishops in the Discipline, it is also true that the Annual Minutes for 1785 state that at the General Conference, which met the year before, the preachers say: “We formed ourselves into an independent church; and following the counsel of John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of church government, we thought it best to become an Episcopal Church, making the episcopal office elective, and the elected superintendent, or bishop, amenable to the body of ministers and preachers.” And yet to show the democracy of early Methodism, it will be noted that while the title page of the first Discipline bears the names of the Rev. Thomas Coke,

LL.D., and the Rev. Francis Asbury, the title page of the Discipline of 1798 bears the simple names, Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury. In the first episcopal address no use is made of the term "bishop," or even "superintendent"; the closing words of the address are these: "We remain your very affectionate brethren and pastors who labor day and night, both in public and private, for your good. Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury."

More frequently in those early Disciplines will be found "Brother Coke" and "Brother Asbury" than Bishop Coke and Bishop Asbury. But who in all the splendid history of the Christian Church ever made fuller or more satisfactory proof of his episcopal ministry than Francis Asbury? Never for a single moment seeming to felicitate himself upon the dignities of his office, he went forth the flaming itinerant, the evangelist-bishop, ambitious for nothing but the salvation of the people. "Let me suffer and let me labor, time is short and souls are daily lost," he writes, as one who could cry with the apostle Paul: "God forbid that I should glory, save

in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Asbury claimed that while Mr. Wesley governed without any responsibility whatever, "the American bishops are as responsible as any of the preachers. They are perfectly subject to the General Conference. They are indeed conscious that the Conference would neither degrade nor censure them, unless they deserved it." Asbury's view of the episcopal office has been accepted and is now accepted by the consensus of Methodist scholarship.

Asbury was rarely and richly endowed with the gifts and grace which fitted him for the episcopal office. Though without academic training, he was a life-long student, an omnivorous reader, mastering a vast range of the learning of his time, in history, philosophy, theology, letters and even the classical languages. Though not a man of vivid imagination, poetical fancy, or transcendent gifts of eloquence, it may be said of him with a spiritual meaning, as was said of Wellington in the military, that he was:

Rich in saving common sense,
Foremost captain of his time;
And, as the greatest only are
In his simplicity sublime.

He was austere and yet the soul of kindness and justice; strict disciplinarian as any general, but always a brother in the gospel; cool-headed as a Paul, and warm-hearted as a Saint John; fervent as a Saint Peter, and practical as a Saint James; an ecclesiastical statesman of the first order to be compared with a Richelieu, but a gospel evangelist, if not of as eloquent a speech, surely of as self-sacrificing a devotion and consecration as a Saint Francis, a Bernard, or a Savonarola. And to all these gifts and attainments add that genius for constructive leadership in which even a Wesley scarcely excelled him, and in which we find the initiating philosophy of the triumphs of a century of evangelism, and you have the combination in character and personality of the greatest man in the history of American Methodism.

For thirty-two years Bishop Asbury led the ever-growing, multiplying Methodist hosts which he saw increase in number from

fifteen thousand to two hundred and fifteen thousand; while its ministry increased from eighty-three to six hundred and ninety-five; nay, for one hundred years has that great itinerant evangelist statesman bishop led us on until from the heights of glory he may behold with joy that greatness, power, and universality of Methodism of which he could not have had the vision or the dream. The spirit of Asbury is with us yet.

Whatever may have been the suggestion of Mr. Wesley as to the new organization, it was Bishop Asbury's ecclesiastical statesmanship that laid deep and broad the foundation of Episcopal Methodism. We do not detract from the glory of a Coke, a Lee, a Garrettson, a Dickins, a Cooper, an Abbott, or a McKendree, when we believe that without the constructive, organizing and administrative genius of Asbury, Methodism never could have become the mighty force for world-evangelism which it has come to be. Bishop Asbury shaped the essential policy of American Methodism for all time. His wisdom contributed more sane, unchanging, abiding, fundamental law to our Methodist

Episcopal Discipline than did the wisdom of any other one man. The entire change of form of the Discipline of 1787 was principally the work of Asbury.

In the explanatory notes appended to the Discipline of 1796, Asbury with Coke gave a most exhaustive and able exposition of the rules and law of the church; an exposition which the church has accepted as authoritative down to the present time. The authority given to Asbury and Coke by the General Conference of 1796 by requesting them to prepare this interpretation of the Discipline did not continue and would not be granted the bishops of to-day by the General Conference.

The first elders of the Methodist Episcopal Church were elected by the General Conference, and the office of an elder was "To administer the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to perform all the other rites prescribed by our Liturgy." On the advice of Mr. Wesley, the General Conference elected twelve elders for the above purpose. Bishop Asbury, taking the suggestion of Mr. Wesley, thought out the

larger plan of the presiding eldership which has developed into the district superintendency; this office, which for more than a century has been a most useful, if not an absolutely essential part of our polity, originated in the ecclesiastical acumen of Bishop Asbury.

While the rule requiring the preacher "to form Sunday schools" did not appear in the Discipline until after the death of Asbury, nor, indeed, until as late as 1828, it will be found that the rules respecting the instruction of children were amplified and emphasized by Asbury, and in the notes prepared for the Discipline of 1796 the bishops called special attention to those rules, using the language which seems to express the advanced thought of our own age: "The proper education of children is of exceeding great moment to the welfare of mankind. . . . The welfare of the states and countries in which they live, and what is infinitely more, the salvation of their souls, do, under the grace and providence of God, depend in a considerable degree upon their education. . . . Let us follow this section [of the Dis-

cipline], and we shall meet many on the Day of Judgment who will acknowledge before the Great Judge, and an assembled universe, that their first desires after Christ and salvation were received in their younger years by our instrumentality." With impassioned eloquence they pleaded for the establishment of Sabbath schools among the poor, as well as among the competent. Out of that prayer of Asbury and Coke came at last, if all too slowly, the Sunday school movement which is the crowning glory of present-day Methodism.

The possibility of the splendid educational equipment of the church of our time may never have dawned upon the imagination of Asbury; indeed, it has been questioned whether the bishop was as alive to the educational as to the evangelistic needs and opportunities of the New World. After the burning of Cokesbury College, which he had done so much to found, he said: "The Lord called not Whitefield and the Methodists to build colleges. I wish only for schools. Dr. Coke wanted colleges." Nevertheless, Bishop Asbury had more to do with the laying of the

foundation of our educational system than Bishop Coke.

In that first Episcopal Address of 1789, in speaking of the Discipline, the bishops say, "We wish to see this little publication in the house of every Methodist, and the more so as it contains our plan of collegiate and Christian education." May we not say that by Asbury's insistence upon the dissemination of Christian literature and his part in the establishment of the Book Concern, with his earnest activity in organizing district schools and others of what may be called secondary, or even primary education, he planted the seed from which has sprung the golden harvest of our splendid seminaries, colleges, and universities? If there have come times, such as followed the burning of Cokesbury College, when the cause of higher education has seemed to decline among us, it has never wholly expired, and by all the tokens of the educational revival of the church to-day, it can never again even decline, but must grow on in universal influence and power forever.

Not only by his influence in founding the

publishing interests of our church did Asbury inaugurate a definite plan and system for the relief of the necessitous cases in our ministry, but by his sympathetic and constant advocacy of the claims of the Preachers' Fund he planted the germs which at the close of a century are developing into the full flower of the most generous provision for our retired ministers that has ever honored the Church of God. In an unpublished letter he writes to a presiding elder, expressing the hope that "the collection for the Preachers' Fund will be noble, not less than the interest of eight or ten thousand dollars." "If the money is not wanted in the Maryland Conference," he writes, "our poor Brethren upon the lakes or away among the rocks of New England will dispense with it." And so his great heart took in the land from Georgia to Maine, and from the Atlantic to beyond the Alleghenies, and the trials, deprivations, and hardships of the preachers were his own. Bishop Asbury took a great interest in the evangelizing of the Indians, and though his hopes with regard to their Christian conversion were never fully realized, we have in a

letter written by Bishop Coke an intimation of the character of this work. He writes: "It gives me great pleasure to find by the last letter of my very dear friend, Bishop Asbury, that we are likely to have a work among the poor Indians, those sons of Shem, as our dear old father in the gospel calls them." It may be doubted whether Methodism has fully carried out the great plan which Bishop Asbury had hoped to have perfected with regard to our mission to the Indians.

Our country owes a debt of gratitude to Bishop Asbury which no monument of marble or of bronze can ever fully acknowledge even in our national capital. No preacher, no statesman, no man of all our country's history ever did so much to inaugurate the movement for the abolition of slavery, as this humane bishop. When the framers of the Constitution were divided on the subject and dared not make a Constitution in which the doctrine of equality, freedom, and the inalienable rights of all men as set forth in the Declaration of Independence would be declared as funda-

mental law; when Jefferson and Washington, though they abhorred slavery, did not deem it good politics to take a firm stand for its legal abolition, Bishop Asbury ceased not to plead for the freedom of the enslaved, and was as responsible as any or as all others, for arraying Methodism and the Methodist Discipline against the evil which threatened to disrupt the church and the nation at their very origin. There were slumbering in the church and the nation the volcanic fires which in time were to shake the social, economic, political and religious foundation of America.

The original peace and harmony of our early Methodism is a fiction; it never existed; and the division of the church in 1844 and 1845 proved it. So the perfect and harmonious union of the States never existed in those days following the adoption of the Constitution; and the Civil War proved it. But as to-day, with all our sectional political animosities buried in the graves of the blue and the gray, we have the most perfect national union the States have ever known, so very soon, please God, with all our ecclesiastical

animosities buried, with even the sad, harsh memories thereof, in the graves of our noble dead, both North and South, Methodism will experience such a union and solidarity, such a power and spiritual potency, and present such an imposing, all-commanding, all-conquering front to the powers of sin and wrong as she has never anticipated save in the dreams of her prophets and the visions of her seers. As the name of Washington will ever draw the citizens of our country into a happier and holier political brotherhood, so the name of Asbury will be the name to unite, and unite forever, all the forms of our glorious Methodism.

Again, Bishop Asbury was one of the mighty men whose life-long championship of temperance helped to initiate that irresistible movement, which for a century has been gathering force and momentum and is now rushing to the high tide of nation-wide prohibition. Bishop Asbury, perhaps more than any other one man, committed the Methodist Episcopal Church to temperance, total abstinence, and eternal enmity to the liquor traffic. Not only was Asbury cham-

pioning the cause of God, of the church, and of humanity in his advocacy of temperance, but his very loyalty to our country, his high-minded patriotism urged him to leadership in the crusade against strong drink. The century-long battle which he did so much to inaugurate is coming to the universal victory.

Nor did this gospel preacher and Methodist bishop hesitate to interest himself in the political welfare of our country. When all the other preachers who had come over from England cut for home on the eve of the Revolution, Francis Asbury stayed by the staff. He believed in the cause of our Revolutionary Fathers; he prophesied that their just and righteous cause would win; he could not, he would not forsake the little Methodist flock in their time of need and danger. He had left his native land for the New World and for the glory of Jesus Christ. With the new land he had cast his lot. On one occasion he wrote: "My dear mother is going swiftly, if not gone, after praying fifty-five years for me. I have often thought very seriously of my leaving my mother as one of the most doubtful sacrifices I have made." And

yet at any and all sacrifice he identified himself with the American Methodists and the American Revolution.

By that he saved Methodism to the new nation; saved it when the attitude of Wesley threatened to destroy it as an evangelizing power in America. It was, therefore, the right of such a man, such a patriot, and such a saint to seek an audience with the most august personage of the country and of the age. At the suggestion of Bishop Asbury the Conference voted to present a congratulatory address to Washington on his inauguration as President of the United States. Asbury and Coke were appointed to formulate and present the address.

Hence, Asbury notes in his diary, "We waited on General Washington, who received us very politely, and gave us his opinion against slavery." Though Bishop Coke accompanied him in his visit to President Washington, Bishop Asbury presented the address in which he made a plea for freedom and for the President's influence in the extirpation of slavery. Evidently, the great frontier bishop was profoundly impressed by

the manner and sentiments of Washington. He became a most devoted admirer of the Father of his Country, and wrote: "The longer I live, and the more I investigate, the more I applaud the uniform conduct of President Washington in all the important stations which he has filled." The good bishop received with profound sorrow the intelligence of the death of Washington. It so unnerved him that he ceased from all work and gave himself to sorrowful meditation and to prayer. He wrote in those gloomy days of universal mourning: "I am disposed to lose sight of all but Washington. Matchless man!" Asbury greatly rejoiced on hearing that in his will the great Virginian, the great patriot, the great Washington, manumitted his slaves.

It is no matter for wonder that a bishop so devoted to Washington and to the Revolutionary cause should have won the esteem and love of thousands of patriots, and been able to set in motion the influences which gained a better understanding, and even awakened the popularity of the people called Methodists.

Well known is the story of the travelings, sufferings, and unparalleled activities of Bishop Asbury. To quote from Dr. Mains: "It has been estimated that in his American ministry he preached about sixteen thousand five hundred sermons, and traveled about two hundred and seventy thousand miles, six thousand miles a year; that he presided in no less than two hundred and twenty-four Annual Conferences, and ordained more than four thousand preachers." Bachelor as he was, he had no home where the devoted wife and loving children greeted him on his return from long and fatiguing journeys. He was the pilgrim bishop without a home save in the hearts of the thousands he had led to God. In such financial straits did he often find himself, that on one occasion he wrote: "I have served the church upward of twenty-five years in Europe and America. All the property I have gained is two old horses, the constant companions of my toil, six if not seven thousand miles every year." But he could treat his poverty with a jest, as when he wrote, "The superintendent bishop of the Methodist Church in America being reduced

to two dollars, he was obliged to make his wants known."

Bishop Asbury did not escape calumny, but he ever treated his detractors with a dignity and patience becoming a Christian gentleman and a bishop of the Church of God. He bore all buffetings, false accusations and persecutions with the stout heart of a great man.

As some tall cliff that lifts its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.

March 31, 1816, at the age of seventy-one, the homeless pilgrim, the frontier itinerant, the weary toiler, the exhaustless giant, sinks at last to rest. Before him has gone the great missionary bishop, his beloved companion, Coke; Whatcoat, too, the spiritual, saintly bishop, has preceded him to the skies. Upon McKendree, the eloquent, fiery, glorious McKendree, falls the old prophet's mantle and Bishop Asbury passes into glory and into history.

FRANCIS ASBURY—ITINERANT

ON a late October day in the year 1771, while the ship on which he had taken passage bore him steadily westward, a youthful voyager, in quest of holy adventure in a far-off land, put his own spirit to the test of his inmost purpose. "Whither am I going?" he exclaimed. "To the New World." "What to do?" "To gain honor?" "No, if I know my own heart." "To get money?" "No," was the firm reply. "I am going to live to God, and bring others so to do."

Not more conscious and definite was the choice by which Pizarro became conqueror of Peru. By like decision and dedication the monk of Erfurt freed Christianity from mediæval bondage. It is not too much to say that by his early determination, and not merely in his later labors and achievements, Francis Asbury, itinerant Methodist, became one of the chief factors in forming the moral character of America.

The year of the birth of this pioneer of the cross, hero of the wilderness, molders of civic manners, and Christian statesman, 1745, was

during the earlier days of the evangelical revival in England. More than a decade yet remained before the period of riots and of violence which blazed the pathway of Wesley and his followers would be concluded. It was the age of Swift and Smollett, of Hume and Bolingbroke. On the continent Rousseau and Voltaire were poison in the veins of the social body. Church and state were alike preyed upon by the irreverent and the mercenary. It was also the year of the attempt of Charles Stuart to regain for his family the British throne.

In August, the month of Asbury's birth, after the Conference session at Bristol, John Wesley went to Newcastle, then in peril from the north, and there remained to comfort the Methodist flock, whose house of worship, being without the city walls, was believed to be in danger of destruction, a fate which happily did not arrive. Like his Lord, Francis Asbury was the son of a humble man named Joseph, not a carpenter, but a farmer and gardener. His mother, Elizabeth, a book-loving, fair-minded, and devout woman, when her son, a lad of tender years,

asked her about the Methodists, gave him a good account of them. He sought their services, and became deeply impressed. At the age of thirteen he was converted. The best converts are the children.

At sixteen the boy Francis became a local preacher, exercising his gifts first in his own father's house. At the Conference of 1767, held in the month of his twenty-second birthday, he was received by the leader of his church into the itinerant ministry. After four years of service in the homeland, at the Conference of 1771 the warm heart of the youth was stirred by the appeal of Mr. Wesley. "Our brethren in America call aloud for help. Who are willing to go over and help them?" Five felt called: two, Asbury and Richard Wright, were chosen. Asbury returned home, and bade farewell to his parents, who were deeply attached to their only child, from whom later they received affectionate letters and from his slender resources generous sums for their support in advancing years.

With especial sadness he parted from a dearly loved mother, upon whom, in this life,

his eyes were never again to look. Friendly Methodists of Bristol fitted him out with ten pounds in money and a suit of clothes, making thereby one of the best possible investments, and becoming partners of God in a mighty business. The fellow missionaries set sail from the old port of Pill, a tempting name to one describing a departure. As yet Francis Asbury had given so little sign of coming greatness that Mr. Green has said, "No one could foresee that one of these two, a young man of six and twenty summers, tall in person, grave in demeanor, was destined to become an apostle whose labors would equal those of any servant of the cross whose name is inscribed on the rolls of the church, since the apostolic age." No one foresee all this? Not man, perchance!

But is there not One who from the beginning marks with unerring accuracy the man of his knowledge and of his choice, and who brings to noble issues the lives of those who are obedient to his will? We believe in the foreknowledge of God, in the election of those whom the Almighty would make the instruments of his plans, and in the master

workmanship by which they are shaped and fitted to their tasks who are willing to be used by him.

A stormy passage to America; throes upon the sea were not a bad preparation for trials and upheavals upon the land! Fifty nights of sleeping between two blankets on the hard deck must have reminded Asbury of Wesley's wellknown remark to John Nelson after three weeks lodging on the floor during one of their preaching trips: "Brother Nelson, let us be of good cheer; I have one whole side yet, for the skin is off but one side."

Fifty days of reading, meditation, prayerfulness, and of faithful preaching to sailors and to shipmates! Would that Methodism might return to the habit of its zealous fathers, who took all men for their congregation, and found pulpits readily. Leaning sometimes against the swaying mast, while he proclaimed the truth, Francis Asbury was not less fitly supported for his office than if he had steadied himself by aid of a richly carved and costly desk, and his experience proved that men are men and in need of the

gospel of Christ, everywhere, in church and out of it, on ocean, or on shore.

At the end of their voyage Joseph Pilmoor and the little society at Philadelphia met Asbury and Wright with the utmost good will. "The people," he wrote, "looked on us with pleasure, bidding us welcome with fervent affection, and receiving us as angels of God." They preached in the large church, then separated, Wright to Bohemia Manor, Maryland; Asbury to New York by way of the Jerseys, where he stopped to preach in the courthouse in Burlington. At Staten Island, three sermons, delivered in the home of Peter Van Pelt, laid the foundations of permanent work.

At Wesley Chapel, John Street, he took for his theme the apostolic declaration, which his own career so well exemplified, "I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." His words were powerful, and he was himself moved by the effect which they produced upon the whole audience, including a considerable number of Negroes, who seemed especially affected. Everywhere such attention

was given his message that he was led to write, "I think the Americans more ready to receive the word than the English." From the first, Asbury took the New World to his heart, just as every ambassador of Christ to any community ought to do. The man who does not identify himself with his constituency lacks leverage, and possesses relatively little power to move the mass.

Entrance upon an untried field of labor is certain to be attended with some form of temptation and trial. The young itinerant suffered much from the cold and exposure of his first Northern winter, which, however, did not chill his ardor, nor prevent relentless activity. Many towns in the region of New York were evangelized. The life of the societies was quickened, converts were made, and new classes organized. The undisciplined condition of much of the work, especially in the cities, was a grievous problem to one trained under the personal influence of John Wesley. At the very outset Asbury criticized this laxity, and set himself to its correction. He aroused opposition, but as his acquaintance and authority increased, his

insistence upon regularity became more influential. The day after certain "sharp debates" had taken place at John Street, a letter came from Wesley requiring "a strict attention to Discipline," and making the courageous administrator of the rules "his assistant," and thus the virtual head of the American societies. Nor can it be doubted that this recognition was wise.

Moreover, the correction of lax methods of life and service proved to be of lasting value to Methodism. Even in this later day there are some who believe that loyal administration and observance of Discipline, not in matters of "mint, anise, and cummin," too often and too officiously tithed, but in "weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith," would strengthen the body of Christ, and tend to enlarge the borders of his kingdom. It is a false philosophy which holds that adherence to moral principle, and to high standards of Christian character and conduct, injures the church and restricts its opportunities. Whatever may be the temporary effect of just and wholesome restraints, it is the church that governs its peo-

ple that has many people to govern, while, as a rule, religious organizations of loose requirements have loose affiliations, and draw little upon the world. A shrewd old farmer once wisely observed, "I've allus noticed that when you let down the bars there's more critters want to git out than want to git in."

"While I stay," said Asbury, "the Rules must be attended to. I cannot suffer myself to be guided by half-hearted Methodists." He was no less fixed upon "the Methodist plan" of an itinerant ministry. He sought—how strangely this affects the mind—"a circulation of preachers, to avoid partiality and popularity." He resisted the pressure of those who would gladly have made him, as a brilliant young preacher, their permanent pastor. He succeeded in securing for a considerable time a succession in appointments every six months.

Methodism has long since been compelled to adapt itself to the needs of settled communities and of complex conditions. But, however unavoidable and necessary this change, it must not be pressed too far. Is it not a most unmethodistic and indefensible

partiality which separates preachers of the gospel into "grades," of which we hear so much, especially when the classification is based upon salaries received? As to popularity, how can it be avoided? How indeed, unless to a reasonable degree by a little greater fidelity to Christ and to the needs of his people. But who wishes to escape popularity, or regards himself in danger of the Master's "Woe, when all men shall speak well of you"?

Now began a period of constant and courageous travels from New York to Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Virginia. Like a flame of fire Asbury swept through the colonies, preaching, visiting the sick and the sinful, organizing, establishing, guiding the work of God. He was too strenuous. Most men belong to one of two classes, those who get tired and rest, and those who rest before they get tired. Francis Asbury belonged to a third and rare group of tireless toilers, with whom those of less energy cannot keep pace, and who sometimes arouse the impatience of those less consecrated. No wonder complaints went to England, and that in 1773

Thomas Rankin was appointed and sent to America as general assistant, not to supplant his younger associate, but to bring to his aid the wisdom and balance of riper experience. The result might have been wholesome had it not been for the inability of Rankin to adapt himself to the American character. Political conditions were now unsettled. Revolution was impending.

In 1773 the first Conference was held by the Methodist societies, which were thenceforward more closely bound together. Asbury became chief preacher on Baltimore circuit, and met his twenty-four appointments regularly, in one year doubling the membership, building five chapels, and opening so many new preaching places that four circuits had to be created from the territory. The next year he spent in New York and Philadelphia, and then returned to Baltimore, where he received news of the affair at Concord between the men of Massachusetts and the royal troops. Though he was English born, this event did not cause Asbury to lose his poise, or give voice to any hasty word. "Surely," said he, "the Lord

will overrule, and make all these things subservient to the spiritual welfare of his church." He had learned higher patriotism than that of native land, and devoting himself not to an earthly but to a heavenly King, proceeded to his labors in Virginia, where a letter from Rankin informed him that he with others "had deliberately concluded to return to England."

Not so the mind of Francis Asbury. He had become naturalized and Americanized. "I am determined," he replied, "not to leave, let the consequence be what it may." All the other English preachers recrossed the sea, but Asbury remained at his post. At first suspected of disloyalty, once arrested, once shot at, confined for a period to the home of his friend, Judge White, of Delaware, and at another time forced to take refuge in the swamps, he made good use of all opportunities for advancing the interests of Methodism. When proofs of his fidelity to his adopted land fell into the hands of American officers, he took advantage of their marked change of attitude to increase his activities.

The period from 1777 to 1781 was characterized not only by political agitation, but by controversy within the young societies over the right of its preachers to administer the sacraments. The now assured leadership and preeminence of Asbury bore the test of this season of difficulty. The work went on effectively until the Conference of 1784 witnessed the formation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which Coke and Asbury ordained elders for the full offices of Christian ministry.

The itinerant labors of Asbury really lasted all his lifetime, for in the highest office he was still an itinerant. In all he traveled more than two hundred and seventy thousand miles, and preached more than sixteen thousand sermons. Afoot and on horse back or by slow and lumbering carts and carriages, he ventured through forests, across plains, and over mountains, north and west and south, making acquaintance of every settlement from Boston to Georgia, and from the seaboard to the wilds of Ohio.

Sorely afflicted, and often temporarily incapacitated for service by malaria, rheuma-

tism, and neuralgia, he pressed forward in a path which meant exposure to storm and cold, sleeping in unsanitary cabins and under the open skies, and preaching when chilled by wintry winds, or burning with fever. Nothing could conquer his passion as an apostle of Christ, or lead him to betray weakness in the face of duty. He fearlessly attacked the evils of his time, including slavery.

His early education was meager, for a reason which must awaken painful memory in some minds, "a horrible dread," to use his own term, of the schoolmaster's birch. Yet he became a great student and a college founder. As he traveled he read. It is a marvelous list of books which are cited in his Journal. He studied even Hebrew on horseback, and he became proficient in the original languages of the Bible and in the best literature.

Unlike Wesley, Francis Asbury lived in a state of single wretchedness. How could he do otherwise when traveling almost constantly, and living on a salary of eighty dollars a year, which until long past middle life it was necessary to share with his par-

ents? Asbury was true to his fellow itinerants, and he refused, even on the appointment of Wesley himself, to accept a bishopric, unless elected thereto by the votes of his brother elders. Thus he gave to Methodism what it does well to guard, as well as prize, a democratic episcopacy.

I will not compare Francis Asbury with John Wesley. The two are incomparable, and equally praiseworthy. Rather let us think of the American Francis in conjunction with his European namesakes of ecclesiastical history. Francis de Sales converted Calvinists to Rome; Francis Asbury brought sinners to Christ. Francis Xavier was a flaming apostle to the cross; Francis Asbury was not only a missionary, but an organizer and a builder. Francis of Assisi was poor and pious; Francis Asbury was poor, pious, and no dreamer of impracticable dreams, nor purveyor of superstitions, however poetical. The best qualities of the Roman Saints Francis were in the sturdy Protestant, and he surpassed them all in sanity of mind and in constructive statesmanship.

More than any other it was this unselfish,

noble man, whose character and attainments would have fitted him to shine in any profession or service, who fashioned the institutions of American Methodism, and of its far flung branches, and who made its itinerancy one of the creative powers of the world. In the United States of America he is deservedly honored. If this nation is in any wise indebted to Episcopal Methodism for social and civic services and achievements, as unbiased students of history declare, then America owes a high tribute of praise to the chief itinerant preacher of this church.

Francis Asbury belongs to all Methodism, and all Methodism belongs to him. In Savannah, before the tablet which marks the spot whereon John Wesley delivered his first sermon in America, I could but think that Methodism is one in Wesley. In the Mohawk valley of New York and again upon the fields and beside the rivers of Georgia, my thought has been, "Here trod the feet of another mighty leader to whom all branches of Methodism point with the pride of ownership." And the prayer has often risen to my lips, "In God's good time and way, may

Methodism be brought into an Asburian unity of spirit and of fellowship in which without restriction, losses, or embarrassments of any kind, North may again join hands with South, while East and West bless the bans, and as filial offspring enter into the sacred relations of a united and a happy family.”



